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February 27, 2017

Honorable Lawrence J. Vilardo
United States District Judge
Robert H. Jackson United States Courthouse
2 Niagara Square
Buffalo, NY 14202

Dear Honorable Judge Vilardo,

This letter is written on behalf of my son, Joseph Kurowski who will come before you in the Western District Federal Court. He has entered a plea of guilty for possession of child pornography. Please know that this came as a complete shock to myself and my family as it is so uncharacteristic of him. It may seem hard to believe given the circumstances, but Joseph has always been a person of good moral character and I ask that you please allow me to give you an idea of who my son is, despite this situation, and how I believe he may have gotten to this point.

Joseph has always been a quiet, shy person with a big heart. I remember his little league baseball coach telling him to never change as he was so naive, innocent and saw the best in everyone he interacted with. As he grew, that did not change much as he is a very open person who tries his best to help people to succeed and continually puts others before himself. He was an only child for eight years and spent a majority of that time with myself, my mom and my youngest sister, Kathy, as we were very close. Whether it was shopping, traveling or simply enjoying the many things to do around Buffalo, he was our little sidekick. Looking back, I now believe that because he spent the majority of time with adults, that is why he was more mature than most kids his age. Joseph was an anxious child that worried about everything. Around the time he began Pre-K/Kindergarten, I noticed that Joseph was pulling at his hair, just above his forehead, so much so that he had a bald spot. He didn't do it all the time, just once in a while and most times didn't seem to realize he was doing it. Other than him pulling at his hair, he didn't appear to be having any other issues, therefore, we just kept an eye on him for that (Trichotillomania). He has continued to do it sporadically since that time and I've noticed it is when he is anxious or maybe stressed about a situation. I believed it to be a stress reliever for him and would continually remind him not to do it.

Joseph has always gotten along with both his brothers. Clearly, they are brothers, so there was the normal sibling squabbles, but nothing more than that. He is also very close with his cousins. He loves them all very much and they, in turn, love him and look up to him as well. He remained extremely close to my mom and was very close with his paternal grandmother as well. He would help both of them out as much as he could around his school/work schedule and I can assure you they both appreciated his help, but even more so, his company. He was never too busy to help them, or just stop in for a visit as he knew, both being widows, that they would become lonely and long for company.

Joseph was always interested in music and singing and took both Chorus and Band through his senior year in high school. He went to a small high school (John F Kennedy), which had only about 100 kids in his graduating class. He seemed to get along with pretty much everyone, no matter what his or her background was. I believe the smallness of his school was a sense of comfort for him, because although he was shy, he still participated in the concerts, show choir and, had a part in the musical. For the most part he liked going to school and did well with his grades. When he was in 11th grade, his grades began to drop a bit and he began having trouble staying awake in class. He was a "typical" high school kid and, honestly, I did not think any more of it than that, as again, his grades weren't horrible, but did drop slightly.

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Joseph graduated from high school in June of 2011 and was accepted into the University at Buffalo's Access to College Excellence (ACE) Program for the Fall of 2011. ACE is a student support program designed for freshman who show great potential for academic success but lack strength in one or more of the standard admissions criteria identified during the admissions process. Upon committee review, a limited number of students are offered admission as a participant in the ACE Program. Transitioning from JFK High School to UB was a culture shock to him. He started out as a Computer Science major and struggled. Besides trying to fit in to the vastness of UB, he was also striving for high grades. The pressure was a lot for him and he was feeling very stressed. We talked about it and he decided he would change majors and go for Music as he had a passion for it. He was accepted into the Music department and from that point forward seemed to be less stressed with his academic grades. He quickly began to notice that he did not have the background and training most of the music majors had, but he, again, had that passion; a hard work ethic and was driven to do what it took to succeed. He researched and found someone in Rochester to give him private voice lessons which he paid for by working part time jobs. I also noticed he was finally beginning to make a few friends within the Music Department.

In 2014, he was still having issues with falling asleep and not being able to concentrate. What I was seeing is someone who was working, going to school and would stay up late doing homework and/or continually playing games with his cousins online and, of course, would be tired. But he insisted it was more than that. He began having trouble driving without starting to fall asleep, which was causing him to miss classes, be late for work and not allow him to take voice lessons from that instructor in Rochester. Because it had such an impact on his goal to succeed and graduate in four years and he knew no matter what he tried, he couldn't function, he went to his primary doctor, who referred him to Dent Tower where he began testing for sleep apnea. Later in 2014, he was quite relieved to be diagnosed with Narcolepsy and finally have the medical care needed to help get that under control. That same year, my mother had kidney failure and my sisters and I began extensive training to provide dialysis for her at her home. I spend the greater part of the spring/summer working and then attending training so that I could become one of her caregivers to administer her treatments. Treatments lasted anywhere from three to four hours, so much of my free time was spent away from our home so that I could help my mom.

At the beginning of December 2014, Joseph came to me and said that he was depressed and felt he needed to talk to someone. At this same time, my mom had become worse and was in/out of the hospital. It was an extremely stressful, as well as mentally and physically (she was having difficulty walking and caring for herself) exhausting time, and because of this, I unfortunately could not understand what could possibly be worse than what my mom was going through. So, I told him he had a good part time job, was on schedule to graduate in May, he was living at home so his meals were prepared for him, his laundry was done and we were paying his car insurance (which was something we did to help him out as I wasn't financially able to help with his tuition fees). I said something along the lines of "what could you possibly be depressed about? Put your big boy pants on, quit being a drama queen, and get your head back in the game". This was the "motherly" advice that I gave my child when he came to me crying out for help. Yes, he was 21 at the time and could have sought help on his own, but he went to the one person who he thought would help him get it, and I let him down. Please know while I feel parental guilt, and always will, he has never told me he blamed me for not helping him find professional help.

Over the next six and a half months, I would go to work; on days I did not have to work late, I would stop home to make dinner for my family and then head up to the Rehab/Nursing home to help take care of my mother. I would stay there until I could get her to safely stay in bed (between 11 PM-1 AM usually) and then repeat the same schedule the next day. I was mentally and physically exhausted from her deteriorating medical condition, plus she was dealing with depression issues of her own. During this time, I began to notice that Joseph would come home in one of three moods. He'd be extremely happy and would have dinner and talk with us, or he'd be irritated or extremely sad and go straight to his room and not associate with any of us. I remember discussing his "attitudes" with my mom and sister and because he had both ups and downs and seemed to have forward thinking goals, we came to the conclusion that he just had a lot

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going on and we all go through that "phase". Looking back now, besides that I was so worn out, I cannot understand why I didn't take the time to help him, especially given the fact that he came seeking it.

As he began his last semester at UB before graduation, I remember him telling me that many of his friends had possible jobs lined up in the music field or were going to continue on for their Master's degree, but he didn't have anything yet. I told him that graduation does not provide the magic wand that offers everyone the perfect job, but instead, for many, it takes time. He was very impatient with that answer and continued to seek employment. In March of 2015, he used a slang word while on a break outside of the Apple store that he worked in and about two weeks later was relieved of his part time position due to a report filed by someone. It was a private conversation, held outside of the store, so he was confused as to the complaint. While never being offered the training before, I showed him the discrimination/harassment training that I have taken in my position at work, which clearly explains that a conversation overheard by someone, or told to someone after you say it, can be construed as discrimination/harassment. He was devastated, regretful, but used it as a difficult learning experience. He spent the next two months focusing on and preparing for his graduation. In May, 2015, I have never been more proud than to watch him walk across the stage at graduation to receive his Bachelors of Science in Music degree. His strong work ethic and perseverance paid off and he graduated in four years. In June 2015, a month or so after graduation, he was hired at GEICO. At first, it was just a job until he could get something that would utilize his degree. As he continued to work at GEICO, I remember having a conversation with him that there are plenty of people who do not have a job that is associated with their degree and that is okay. I told him to find something that he loved to do, and then, do your best to succeed at it.

That same month, June of 2015, I got a call that I should get to the Nursing home as soon as possible. Joseph took me there and remained until all my siblings arrived. As he left, he gave his Grandmother a kiss and she told him she loved him. He was the last person she spoke to before the Morphine had her drift into an unconscious state. She passed away the following morning. All my children were extremely close to her, so it was devastating to all of us. I do not know how he was able to do it, but Joseph sang Ave Maria at his Grandmother's funeral. It was so moving and such a beautiful tribute to her. Through his voice, it showed just how much he loved, honored and was going to miss her.

For the next four months, my siblings and I spent numerous hours gutting and redoing my mother's house in preparation of selling it. I was determined to do that as the last thing needing to be done before I could once again dedicate myself to my family. During that time, Joseph seemed to be doing well at his new job at GEICO and spoke highly of the company, his supervisors, managers and colleagues. From what I knew, he was excelling in the training program and took great interest in it. Joseph is the type of person who puts everything into something he sets his mind to and is very driven to set high goals. He was enrolled in management courses at Erie Community College and Medialle to continue to educate himself so that he could succeed and wanted to excel and move up quickly within the company.

In October 2015, we took a weekend vacation to visit my brothers in Pennsylvania and Joseph was able to join us. It was nice to have our family together again and we enjoyed many tears and many smiles as our first vacation without my mom. It was only a week or so after we returned that the FBI came to our house. I was in shock and could not figure out what was going on. What could anyone in our house have done that was so bad that the FBI would be busting into our home? That is when I was told that my son, Joseph, had been on an adult app called Whisper and was communicating with females. I have had numerous conversations with Joseph since that day as I am trying to figure out how that all came about. Knowing him and how he handles himself, what would ever possess him to have a conversation of that sort with a young lady? He has a brother and cousins that age and has NEVER spoken to them, treated them or their friends with disrespect or used that type of language. In fact, I said that to him at one point. I said, "Joseph, that could be your cousin"! His face turned pure white and he looked like he was going to puke before passing out. I could tell that he hadn't even thought of it like that. He immediately said, "No, mom. I was on an 18+ site. I had an image in my mind of someone my own age. I was having multiple conversations all the time and just

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wanted to talk to somebody, anyone that would carry on a conversation with me. I felt like I didn't fit in with anyone in the real world. I don't drink, I don't do drugs, I am not sports minded, I do not fit in. I tried "real" dating sites like Plenty of Fish and didn't get any attention from anyone. Not one person took an interest". He could not understand what was so wrong with himself that he couldn't even have a simple conversation with anyone. There was no one to share his successes with, no one to tell how his day went. I was too busy, his brothers were involved in school and sports, he and his dad never had a relationship where they could really talk to each other, besides, his dad was too busy carting Joseph's brothers around to those activities. Although Joseph invited his friends over, they were continually too busy for him as they were beginning the next chapter of their lives. This is when he went on Whisper, which from what he understood was an adult site, and with that, he finally had people who were not too busy, but would have conversations with him. It became his social life. It became a false reality that he would crave as he finally felt he had people to listen and talk to. I have read and re-read the conversations he had with the four victims between February 2015 and October 2015. It is extremely upsetting. I was appalled and it disgusts me to no end. While I am not a psychiatrist, it is my belief that all his emotional and psychological baggage played into an addiction to the computer and the false reality he created. He became hooked with talk that was sexual in nature. He incited dreadful behavior and ignored morality as he clung to conversations of that type. Please know I do NOT condone any of this, however, he is not a pedophile. He disregarded factual information, yet he was not intentionally seeking out young kids. His lack of integrity, virtue and beliefs were sadly pushed aside for what became a virtual reality. I am angry and saddened that he would engage in this type of behavior. How I wish I could turn back time and have helped him get to the professional he was searching for. I truly believe, knowing my son as I do, and seeing the difference in him since he has been seeing Ms. Ashlee Rudolph, his mental health counselor, and taking medication that has, in my opinion, made him think more clearly and level headed, that he would not have turned to social media as he did.

In closing, I am a firm believer that everything happens for a reason. My son takes responsibility for the foolish, senseless use of social media and understands that it is a serious offense. This too may not seem right to you, but he has repeated to me that his intent was never to hurt anyone, nor break the law. He is crushed beyond belief. He has lost his career, and the possibility he will ever have a job in his chosen profession. He has felt the brunt of losing his independence and ability to pay his student loan and car debt, and, most importantly, feels incredibly remorseful for his poor judgement which caused him to become addicted to sexting. On the flip side, he has expressed gratitude that he has received the professional help that he so desperately needed and longed for but did not follow through to receive. I have researched a lot about depression/anxiety since this happened and I can assure you that I will not turn my back on him again and will continue to help him in any way that I can to deal with this and find a way to move forward. I hope and pray that the outcome from this will include continued therapy with Ms. Rudolph or a similar professional and that somehow he will be able to prove to everyone that while he needs mental health help, he can reenter society and will contribute to in a positive manner as he has planned his entire life.

I thank you, in advance, for any consideration you give this letter.

Sincerely,

Susan Kurowski

Joseph Kurowski
233 Bright Street
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February 21, 2017

Honorable Lawrence J. Vilardo
United States District Judge
Robert H. Jackson United States Courthouse
2 Niagara Square
Buffalo, NY 14202

Your Honorable Judge Vilardo,

I would like to start with a sincere apology. Not only do I apologize to the victims, but also to my family, friends, you, and all who I have tied up in dealing with what I have done. What I did was terribly wrong, not only lawfully, but also morally and ethically. It goes against what I was taught as well as how I have tried to live my life. There is absolutely no excuse for my actions. I put myself in this situation and take full responsibility, as I was the adult in this circumstance. I am remorseful for my actions and painfully regret what I have done. Again, I offer no excuses for my behavior and I know that I cannot change what I did now, but I would like the opportunity to share more about my life prior to this so that you may have a better understanding of my morals, beliefs, strengths, and struggles.

In December of 2014, I asked my mom if she would help me get to a counselor because I felt extremely depressed, lonely and just sensed something was not right. I did not get the response I was looking for, as to me, she seemed too busy and just kept blowing me off as if I was just whining and there was no real problem. One of my best friends, Maria, actually talked with me about counseling services offered at the University at Buffalo, where I was a student at the time. She gave me the phone number to call and encouraged me to see a therapist. I called the office, but the first appointment was not for three weeks. In my mind, waiting three weeks every time I wanted to talk to someone was not going to help me much, if at all. I decided not to bother making the appointment. Today, I wish that I had made that appointment because instead of making progress with my problems, my sadness and loneliness compacted and grew. For a long time, I loathed myself for not having the confidence to establish a social life. To me, this was an issue I had to fix as it wasn't good enough to accept my inability to fit in, therefore, I decided it was time to make an effort to improve it. I decided the first thing I would work on would be speaking with peers and figuring out how to relate to people easier. Then, starting conversations would not be so hard. Secondly, I would keep conversations going so it would seem natural; just like learning to greet, handle and relate to customers on the phone, which I later excelled at while employed at Geico. Unfortunately, my anxiety kept me from executing this in the real world and I turned to the internet for solutions.

My intention was to speak with people my own age, because I had trouble doing that in real life. Behind my computer screen, I intended to have ongoing friendly conversations so that I could gain the confidence needed to speak with new people in the real world. My intention showed through while using multiple dating sites before Whisper. However, on these dating sites, I did not find success. It felt as if the only messages or responses I received were fake profiles set up to lure people into buying things. This caused my self-image and self-esteem to plummet even lower than it had already been because I felt that I, myself, was the problem. Maybe it was my looks or my major in school; I wracked my brain trying to

figure out how I was being pre-judged. This is when I did an internet search for alternative methods of talking with people. One solution was the app Whisper. It was described as an adult app with people from all over the world posting about problems, funny situations, and casual dating. I felt that was an app where I would not be judged for not being the macho jock or partier most others my age seem to profess being. I decided that seemed like a good solution to my problem. The anonymity factor included no profile or pictures, and your username automatically changed frequently if you did not change it manually. I quickly became addicted to scrolling through the posts that were liked the most, as well as local posts; much like an open Facebook feed for college students and older. However, instead of being me, I began feeling as if I did fit in by being "well liked and popular" due to the multiple conversations I began having. Because of that false reality, I not only became skeptical of who I was talking to (assuming they were bots or fake), but I also convinced myself that it didn't matter because at least I was having conversations and working on being able to keep them up.

I spoke with many people my own age. I was having ten or more conversations per night, as well as playing on-line games such as League of Legends, and unfortunately, it became easy to lose track of whom I was messaging with. Knowing myself that I was very lonely and had low self-esteem, I felt I could not trust anyone, as they would take advantage of me, but again, it was just conversations and would never become my reality. Looking back now, I am embarrassed to say that I was so focused on "fixing" my low self-esteem and inability to keep a conversation alive, that I ignored the fact that it was wrong. If I had known back then what I know now about that delusion that I created in my mind, I would not have even made a profile on traditional dating sites like Plenty of Fish or OkCupid, much like I would never consider going to bars or clubs as a way to meet people. None of this is realistic nor true to my character, yet I allowed myself to fall into it and become something I am not. I would never purposely commit an illegal action. I was fully compliant with any and all conditions for every website and app I was using, because that is truly who I am. I follow the rules, sometimes to a fault. Yet I was so lonely and desperate that I ignored reality.

Using this app "Whisper" became an addiction. Similar to how social media sucks people in, I was drawn to this sexting community. It was not specific to these underage girls, however. As a matter of fact, I chose this app because it was described as an adult app and made you agree to terms stating as such. I would have been much happier speaking with only people my own age. It was somewhat random who I would end up talking to. There were several occasions where I ended up talking to women much older than me, in their forties or older. There were also conversations with males, and although I am not homosexual, these sexual conversations happened with them too. In the same way that I am not a homosexual, I am not a pedophile. I have no attraction to underage girls. I like women that are my age, or maybe a year or two younger. I have no romantic partner in my life and haven't for quite some time. This combined with my other diagnosis of depression caused me to be easily susceptible to addiction to this sexting culture. Being aware of this now, and having on going conversations with Ms. Rudolph makes it easily clear and avoidable that this would never happen again.

It deeply saddens and disgusts me to think about the fact that I ignored age during this time. While there is no excuse for this, I was stuck on the fact that this was an adult app; the delusion that everyone was probably fake and trying to get me to sign up for something; and because there are no profiles, there was no way to know even the most basic information about someone such as their first name, so it must not be "real". Because it was an alternate reality, I think I was trying to be one of the hot shot guys that had tons of girlfriends that I was always envious of. I am not sure why I was so envious of them. That is a far cry from who I am or how I act. I suppose it may have given me a sense of masculinity, or a boost in ego, or perhaps to live up to my dad's standards of being popular. I have come to realize that I do not need to live up to others standards. That it is okay to be me and not have what society deems the "perfect life". Each week after talk therapy, I began to see that, outside of my poor decisions with the current

situation. I am happy with who I am and I feel my self-image and self-esteem have improved some over the last few months, which, in my opinion, is a huge accomplishment.

In the past, every day was an emotional roller coaster. I was going a million miles per minute. It was as if I was running through a forest, and each tree was another topic or thought. The running never stops, bouncing from topic to topic and thought to thought, never being able to sit still. The best part about being a musician in school is that there is always things to work on and improve. The downside was I could not sit still to even have legitimate practices for technique. It also was not easy to control where my head was at. I could solve an immensely hard music theory analysis in the car on the drive home, and when I arrived home, I could not put even one word or note on paper. It was so frustrating because I knew I had the intelligence, but I could not harness it effectively at all. My mom used to go crazy because I would continually bounce my legs under the table. I did that even worse while working at Geico, but my coworkers didn't mind, it was a good laugh, but was hard to sit still without doing ten things at once. It is quite exhausting. Everyone is passionate about the things they care about. My entire life needed to be that way. If I could not get excited or dive head first into what I was doing, I probably wasn't going to do it. I set crazy standards and expectations for myself, and if I did not attain them, then I needed to internally scold and beat myself up so that I would do more until I get it right. It is tough when everything gives you that sensation because you cannot relax or be subpar at anything. That leads to oversteering and either defeating yourself before you begin, or getting better and trying harder. Through my talks with Ms. Ashlee Rudolph, my mental health counselor, I have come to realize that I am an all-or-nothing type of person. This can be a good quality if used correctly, but a terrible burden if left unchecked. Coming to that realization has helped me immensely because I can focus that energy into positive results, and mitigate the negatives by expressing what I wish went differently and working on a legitimate plan instead of self-abuse. I definitely feel much clearer and able to focus myself today.

I was diagnosed with Narcolepsy at the end of 2014. The medication, Modafonil, that I take for that has had an effect on me I did not originally recognize. I would have high highs and low lows. I have always been that way but as I later discovered the medication amplifies feelings; pain, anger, etc. Therefore, what I assumed was my normal hyper was extra super hyper. What I assumed was sad or angry was panic attacks or rage. The only portion I did realize was when I got even slightly hungry, I would be starved to the point that I could not drive home from school due to stomach pain. After recently starting mental health treatment, I was diagnosed with depression and anxiety and was prescribed Fluoxetine. The Fluoxetine seems to balance me out in that regard. I did not notice this myself at first, however. My mom and medical advisors made me aware they could see a difference in me. I asked them to update me as such from the start, so when they did, I tried to look inward and what I found is that I am no longer violently swinging between moods, and little things that may have driven me insane blows away like leaves in the wind. I also firmly believe this is thanks to the talk therapy I have with Ms. Rudolph. I feel much more at ease after talking things out with her. Even if I am no further along in solving a problem, just knowing that someone else is thinking it over and will give me honest feedback is such a comfort.

During this time of pretrial, it can be easy to fall into the negative emotions and overwhelming clouds that hover over me. I have been fortunate enough to have support and have found many, many things to be thankful for. One of the greatest gifts, if not the greatest gift, I have been given is my family. I don't mean this in the traditional sense. My father and I have always had a difficult relationship. Many times, I felt that he was cruel and cold. In my estimation, he showboated at my expense and I felt abused by him over the 23 years prior to all of this. I know that I wasn't the popular son he was looking for. I played baseball when I was young, and tennis in high school, but I was in many more musical clubs than sports teams. I have tried my whole life to please my parents; even if it may not always have been evident to them. Particularly, I felt that I wasn't good enough for my dad because I wasn't someone who lifted weights or worked out all of the time. I felt like he didn't like or care about most things I did so we would

bond over tennis and sometimes, I could sneak in talking about other things too. However, going through talk therapy and being on medication has changed all of that. For the first time in my life, I feel like I can hear and understand what he is trying to say, not just the words that come out of his mouth. I no longer take offense to it, but I can hear how much he does care and love me through his rough worded exterior. I know, and have always known, that he loves me but now I'm able to hear it and not the attacks like I once did. I owe a large part of this to Ms. Rudolf. I believe the medication is helping my rationality and understanding of his words. Moreover, Ms. Rudolf has helped frame my thinking so as not to hear the negativity and that is life altering.

Similarly, I believe my mom now is also able to hear me. I am incredibly grateful for my relationship with her. I look up to her as a role model and even as a hero. In most recent years, I felt like she didn't have the patience or motivation to care about me, as she rarely came to my concerts while I attended college or had time to talk with me. It seemed like the person I looked to for guidance was done with me. Now, it feels as if she sees me, hears me, and has a better understanding that narcolepsy and depression are real things. She no longer grumbles at the site of me being at home, as she knows it won't be the unstable Joey that is a drama queen. She understands the fact that narcolepsy is real and affects me. She does her best to understand depression and anxiety. She looks for understanding and when she doesn't comprehend it, she now makes the effort to try to understand instead of writing it off as melodrama. Her support has been a life altering change that God has blessed me with, invaluable and majorly uplifting during my struggles.

Another great blessing has been reconnecting with friends. For a long time, I attempted to see my friends regularly by planning dinners or board game nights for us to see each other. Although we met up a few times, for months I reached out to friends with negative replies or no replies at all. It was tough to get a return text from some of my best friends. I always took it personally, like they didn't want to spend time with me, because I take friends and commitments very seriously. However, during part of my talk therapy, we discussed how my depression manifests itself. I have come to see that a major way it manifested was taking things personally that have nothing to do with me. My friends were not ignoring me, but in fact, they were in the mists of graduation and getting out into the real world. Now, throughout this difficult time, my friends have been nothing but supportive. I cannot thank them enough for that. Our relationships are strained because of my pretrial release restrictions, but they do everything in their power to not let me feel I am an inconvenience. This truly helps me understand how loved I am. I only hope that in return I can do something for them in the future to repay my gratitude.

I am also grateful for the wonderful people who have come into my life because of this situation. Ms. Ashlee Rudolf has been a tremendous force in helping me see that there is light at the end of the tunnel and that I can manage my stress so that life isn't quite so overwhelming. Another person is the physician's assistant at my doctor's office, Ms. Kristen Batt. She has given me time, understanding, and spiritual wisdom as well as healing. Finally, there is Mr. Mike Sawicz, whom I meet with at the Department of Labor. He has given me wisdom, encouragement, and the self-awareness of my previous contributions and possible future contributions to the workforce. All of these people together have given me valuable tools to succeed moving forward. Finally, I have been given the gift of patience. In a world that was moving way too fast for me, I am able to ponder deep thoughts and not be distracted by the hustle and bustle of the outside world so that I can search deep to determine who I am and who I will be and to always continue to improve and learn.

For many years I struggled with my faith as a Catholic and constantly questioned it. It wasn't that I doubted, but I wanted to be certain about what I believe. I was raised Roman Catholic and although it follows tradition, I always asked why. There was a time for several years I spent in an Anglican Community which is very similar to the Catholic community however, in my opinion, they have a much

richer music tradition. Many days there, I felt the presence of God and I think that is why I wanted to be a musician. Singing in church helped me reconnect with that near and dear feeling of closeness to God. I have given my woes up to God so that He can guide me through any difficulties I will have ahead. In doing so, I have not felt burdened with the weight of the world on my shoulders. It has allowed me to focus more on the can-do's rather than the can't-do's. This faith-filled outlook, combined with Ms. Rudolph's coaching to take things one day at a time, has alleviated my stress so that I can focus on more productive things such as obtaining scholarly materials in order to better myself moving forward. It is easy to lose sight and become overwhelmed, but I am confident in saying that I can now find support from my counselor, doctor, and family/friends. The cliché saying is, "God works in mysterious ways". I believe that I have found and will continue to find that that fact is true. This feeling of faith is something I have not felt in a long time.

One of my biggest fears is being a burden. Not being able to help myself or the ones I care about troubles me very deeply. I want to be self-sufficient and not rely on others to take care of me, as much as I want to help others as that is how I am. This time I have spent in pretrial has affected me greatly because of the fact that I was on leave and later terminated from Geico. I have a lot of respect for people that utilize their time by bettering themselves and those around them. I began working at the age of sixteen in order to pay for things such as a car, so my parents would not need to cart me around to activities I was involved in; to pay for college, so that I could get an education to prepare myself to be financially independent. Also, for gifts, so there could be more fun in our lives. For example, board games and video games for my brothers, or speakers and earbuds for my mom. All of these things played into my strategy to show gratitude, excel in financial management, and become financially independent. My hope is that I will be able to get back on my feet, become financially stable, and contribute to society in a positive manner. I have financial obligations that I do not want to default on. This weighs heavily as it is extremely important to me to repay my student loans and car payment as I made a promise to do so when taking them out. It is my responsibility and my obligation to fulfill that.

I take full responsibility for my actions and fully understand now how careless I allowed myself to be. It sickens me that I sacrificed my moral standards. I have learned a lot through this atrocious experience. I hope that you can see that I genuinely wish to improve myself, and that you may find a just punishment that allows me to grow rather than wither. I know I have much to offer the world, my country, and my community. I assure you that I will work hard to utilize my life to reach and exceed that potential. My wish is that after reading my letter and considering the entire case, I am allowed to aid society – whether that means engaging in community service, aiding my family at home by keeping the home clean and functional, reentering the workplace, and/or being a support for others as they have been for me. I can guarantee you that while I know it will take time, I want to, as well as look forward to, continuing to work with my mental health counselor so that I can be the best person possible. If that means ongoing medication to keep myself stable, than that is what I will do, but I will most certainly remain in talk therapy, even if that is not a mandated condition. I feel and see the tremendous improvement it has already had on my wellbeing. I am committed to not letting this define me, but to look at it as a tough, unfortunate lesson. One that pushed me to find the help I most desperately needed. I humbly request a chance to prove to you, my family and others that this was an aberrational period and that I will make the improvements necessary to be successful in the near future. I both appreciate and thank you for taking the time to read my letter.

Best Regards,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Joseph Kurowski". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Joseph Kurowski

JOB SEARCH LIST 12/15/2016

All State – agency owner/agent – Wants me to open my own agency or work in one of their agencies.

Allegis Global Solutions – customer analytics manager

Altitude marketing llc – sales and management training program

Anjaneyap Global – Business analyst

Anthem – administrative assistant II

Apple Inc. – Red Zone Specialist

Apple Inc. – store Leader Program

AXA Advisors – financial advisor – reached out to me via phone, disclosed felony plea per Ms. Horvatits request, no job could be extended because of FIRNA regulations.

Bankers Life – life insurance consultant - contacted me based on resume – interview (10/20) – follow up call (10/21) – follow up interview (10/25) – wants to hire me but I need the license.

Blue Bridge finance – documentation specialist

Bluewolf, an IBM company – talent acquisition associate

Brady – inbound Sales and service representative – called and left message, could not call back because of long distance. – called back to have phone interview (12/1) – scheduled in person interview for 12/8 (12/5) – disclosed plea and computer restriction per Ms. Horvatits request, interviewer claimed he would call and that would not disqualify me from the position. (12/5) – no call was received from Ms. Horvatits to verify, unable to go on interview. (12/8) – Kevin called me back and LM to call him – called, he was on another call, LM (12/8)

Brisbane – office position

Brock, Schechter & Polakoff LLP – receptionist

Buffalo Museum of science – external relations assistant

Buffalo transportation – phone operator

Buffalo Transportation inc. – Dispatcher

Campus labs – campus support specialist – phone interview, 2 in person interviews, offered the job (including offer packet), offer was then pulled due to charges.

Campus Labs – operations associate

Caplugs – PC support specialist

Center One LLC – customer care

CGI Communications inc. – sales associate – Phone interview, company located in Rochester so not pursuing at this time.

Combined Insurance Group – Emailed me looking for me to interview for their company. Emailed Mr. Lachman back inviting him to call me for a phone interview on 12/9 and exploring the opportunity.(12/8)

Crossfuze – tech Support analyst – phone interview, no offer received once disclosure was made.

Datrose inc, - medical transportation scheduler

Department of Labor - Bureau of labor statistics – Economics Assistant

DMMA – customer service representative

Engineered facility solutions inc. – administrative assistant

Entrepreneurial Idea

ESM/Ferolie – order entry/customer service representative

Family dentistry – office manager

Farmers Insurance – Agency owner/broker – Called me to open my own agency or work in a new agency – passed my resume around despite my situation – got a call from Dave, who is opening a new agency – phone interview (10/24) – in person interview (10/27) – offered job despite charges (10/27) – all commission based, and firm is scheduled to open December 1st. also he prefers me to get my health insurance license.

Fetch logistics – career manager

Fidelis care – Insurance Agent

First Source Advantage – Student loan collection agent – phone interview (11/9) in person interview (11/11) – Running background check – did not seem concerned when disclosed charges – 2nd in person interview given, date TBD (11/11)

First Source advantage – student loan collection representative

Flexovit – Press Technician

Foresters financial group – financial and insurance consultant – emailed me for an interview – interview (11/1) – given final interview TBD (11/1) –interview scheduled for 11/8 – interview cancelled on

11/8 due to pending charges – job offered contingent on no felony conviction due to license requirement.

Fosters Financial – financial representative

Frontier Science & Technology Research Foundation, Inc. – computer user support

Home Depot – Distribution center

Independent Health care – Customer service Representative – was contacted to do online evaluations – completed 2 online evaluations (11/14) – was emailed that next steps would be coming soon based on my qualifications (11/15)

Ingram Micro – market development specialist

Ingram Micro – support specialist – phone interview – in person interview given TBD – finished application questionnaire on line (10/27)

Integer – Payroll Coordinator

Internal Revenue Services – contact representative

IQLogg inc. – Junior business analyst

JWC Real Estate – office assistant

Mattel Inc. – sr. manager in logistics

Media sales plus – call center team leader/supervisor

Mod –Pac – AB-finishing operator

Moog – Assembler/Tech

Moog – plant cleaner

Mutual of Omaha – financial consultant – emailed me for interview – called back and set up interview (10/27) – interview (11/2) given 2nd interview TBD (11/2) – background check info received in the mail with charges included and letter saying that may disqualify me from the position (11/16).

National Fuel – customer service representative

National fuel – human resources

National fuel – operational specialist

National Grid – Graduate Development Program, Marketing/Finance

National Income life – consultant – phone interview – emailed me – called and gave contact info for interview (11/2)-called me for interview, company decided against due to disclosure (12/13)

New Era Cap – Customer relations specialist

New Era Cap – executive assistant COO/CFO

NY-DOL – equal opportunity employment specialist

OnetTouch Direct – customer care Associate – phone interview, in person interview, offered job position, offer was retracted after disclosure of charges.

Penske truck Leasing – sales and management training program

Plain green LLC – Account services professional – Had phone interview (12/1) – scheduled in person interview for 12/6 – Ms. Horvatits asked me to disclose plea and computer restriction to interviewer prior to interview, and call for verification.(12/2) – called interviewer and disclosed, asked her to call Ms. Horvatits (12/5) and she agreed. – no call was received from Ms. Horvatits and she called to cancel interview (12/6)

Primetime vision marketing – entry sales account manager

Prudential financial services – financial consultant – emailed me for interview – called and left message (10/28) – called and left message (11/2)

R & J Metal Finishing inc. – Laborers

Randstand General Staffing – Loan services clerk

Randstand staffing – admin/customer service

Randstand staffing – customer service representative

Randstand staffing – data entry

Randstand staffing – data entry – phone interview – in person interview – interviewer stated she would call me after gathering more information. Job offer pending background check/charges and typing test.

Randstand staffing – HR Generalist

Randstand staffing – inbound call representative

Randstand staffing – quality inspection supervisor

Randstand staffing – receptionist

Receptionist position on buffalojobs.com

Altitude marketing llc – sales and management training program

Anjaneyap Global – Business analyst

Anthem – administrative assistant II

Blue Bridge finance – documentation specialist

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Flexovit – Press Technician

Frontier Science & Technology Research Foundation, Inc. – computer user support

Home Depot – Distribution center

Ingram Micro – market development specialist

Internal Revenue Services – contact representative

IQLogg inc. – Junior business analyst

Robert Half – Administrative professional – phone interview

Russell Tobin & associates – entry level data analyst

Safe Inc. – customer service Representative

Solidify inc. – account specialist

Spectrum – office assistant

Stall senior medical LLC – member liaison

State Farm – Sent me a letter seeking me out for employment: called and left message (11/17) – Called me back and had phone interview (11/18) – recommended me to agencies with specific owners who could mentor me to take over an agency of a retiring owner(11/18) – Dan (who owns an agency in the area) called and wants to meet me, set up interview for 11/22 (11/18) – did assesments for owning a firm (11/20) – cancelled meeting with Dan per Ms. Horvatits request (11/21) called the rectruiter back and made him aware of charges and restriction per Ms. Horvatits request and asked him to contact her for verification.(11/21), he had no problem with pending charges. Got confirmation Ms. Horvatits received a message from him and called back and left a message. Rescheduled meeting with Dan for 12/6 (11/30) – had interview with Dan on 12/6. Dan expressed immediate concern in regard to whether my license would be pulled. He gave me information to call in about it. – called the DOI and they gave me an email to send documents to concerning my case, and they could assign someone to work with me and make a determination. (12/6)

Strueben Foods Inc. – production position

System personnel inc. – accountant

TEKsystems – Recruiter/sales management Trainee

The Oldham Agency – entry level into management

Tony walker and Co. – HR assistant

Travelers – Customer service representative

UB – assistant director, building and grounds

UB – financial aid assistant

UB – human resource specialist

UB – record assistant

UB – Records Assistant

UB – Staff Assistant

UB – Staff Assistant

UPS – Package Handler

US small Business Administration – Office of disaster Assistance – customer service

Vivint – replied to an email interested in meeting me (11/3)

Western New York Broadcasting WNED/WFLO – Membership associate

Yahoo – data facilities/infrastructure associate

Yahoo – supervisor, customer care

Yahoo! – customer service representative – phone interview, awaiting further instructions for in person interview.

Yahoo! – service desk analyst associate

Yahoo! – technical trainer